

MEDICAL MARRIAGE CERTIFICATES.

In the *Review* for January, 1912, you published a New Zealand paper, "Medical Marriage Certificates," proposing to make it compulsory to obtain a medical certificate of health before marriage, but not proposing that a bad certificate should prevent marriage.

In the 1913 January number is a translation from "Nylaende," a Norwegian journal of women's rights, which advocates a health-declaration in preference to a medical certificate, without which no marriage could take place, "That there should be two written declarations, one from the man and one from the woman, stating that neither suffers from any disease or weakness which could be considered either an obstacle to marriage, or a danger to the health of the other partner or of the offspring."

It is interesting to hear different views, and both are good in that they draw attention to the importance of the subject and would therefore be educational; but the New Zealand proposal would give data which is much needed, as a medical certificate by a reputable medical man would be reliable, while a health declaration made by the person whom it concerns, and who cannot get married without making it, would in many cases be most unreliable. Also under the New Zealand proposal there is little, if any, inducement to give anything but a perfectly truthful certificate as a bad one would not prevent marriage, though it should make a conscientious person change their mind. The Norwegian proposal would prevent marriage with one who could not make a satisfactory health-declaration, and, therefore, would be a temptation to any not high-principled to make a false declaration, or an excuse for others to dispense with the ceremony. It appears to aim largely at preventing the marriage of those suffering from venereal diseases, though it also says "That the result would be that a large number of defective individuals, especially such as those whose offspring are now supported by the community, would renounce the idea of founding a family." If in Norway they can hope for so much they must be in advance of Britain and her colonies, for I am afraid our experience does not give us much reason to expect any such result; our experience is that the defective individuals whose offspring are supported by the community are chiefly of the irresponsible class who consider their own inclination first and the good of the community last.

A medical certificate would be useful in that it would give reliable data, and also that it would draw the attention of the public to the necessity of both parents being healthy, which matter has in the past been largely ignored. A health-declaration would be of little or no use in regard to data though it would be of some use in drawing the attention of the public to the subject. But as a bar to marriage neither would be effective as neither would influence the most undesirable class—the manifestly unfit; for them segregation seems to be the only remedy, and in the present state of public opinion and limited knowledge of heredity that can only be enforced to a limited extent.

JESSIE FIELD.

Nelson, N.Z.